



Mao Zedong:

A REVOLUTIONARY LEADER

A BIOGRAPHY
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MAO ZEDONG (1893-1976)

Mao Zedong was born on December 26, 1893 into a peasant family in Shaoshan, a province in central China. After training as a teacher, Zedong travelled to Beijing where he worked in the Peking University Library. During this time, Zedong began reading Marxist literature. In 1921, he became a founder of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and set up a branch where he lived.

In 1923, Mao's communist party allied with a nationalist party called the Kuomintang (KMT) and defeated warlords who controlled much of northern China at that time. Both parties then launched an anti-communist purge. Mao led his followers on the 'Long March', which was a 6,000 mile journey to northwest China in hopes of establishing a new base.

The Communists and KMT were allied during eight years of war with Japan, but shortly after WW2 ended, civil war broke out between them. The communists were victorious, and on October 1, 1949 Mao proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Mao along with other communist leaders set out to reshape Chinese society. Industry came under state ownership and China's farmers began to be organized into collectives. All opposition was ruthlessly suppressed.

SOURCES

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MAO ZEDONG

In 1958, Mao tried to launch a more 'Chinese' form of communism called 'Great Leap Forward'. This aimed at mass mobilization of labor to improve agricultural and industrial production. However, this backfired and caused a massive decline in agricultural output, resulting in poor harvests, famine, and deaths to millions. The policy was abandoned which weakened Mao's position.

In an attempt to reassert his authority, Mao launched the 'Cultural Revolution' in 1966, which tried to purge the country of impure elements and revive the revolutionary spirit. One and a half million people died and much of the country's cultural heritage was destroyed. Many cities became on the verge of anarchy, and Mao sent in an army to restore order.

People thought Mao appeared victorious, but his health was deteriorating. His later years saw attempts to build friendships with the United States, Japan, and Europe. In 1972, US President Richard Nixon visited China and met with Mao.

Mao died on September 9, 1976.



"The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history. " - Mao Zedong